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NOTICE OF PREPARATION

FROM: Mehdi Morshed
Executive Director
California High-Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, California 95814

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Project Level Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for a Los Angeles (Union Station) to Orange County (Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center [ARTIC]) High-Speed Train system, primarily along the LOSSAN Rail Corridor

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority), as the Lead Agency for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process for a proposed California High-Speed Train (HST) system, is issuing this Notice of Preparation of a Project Level EIR/EIS for the Los Angeles (Union Station) to Orange County (Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center [ARTIC]) segment of the proposed HST system.

The Los Angeles to Orange County HST EIR/EIS will consider HST service only to Anaheim. HST service between Anaheim to Irvine may be considered in the future. The Project Level EIR/EIS will develop engineering designs to 30% for the alignment options and turn-back/layover train storage facilities and stations for the proposed HST project. The EIR/EIS will also analyze the environmental effects associated with construction, operation, and main HST repair and heavy maintenance facility of the HST system along the LOSSAN rail corridor, and it will propose mitigation measures to avoid or minimize potential significant effects.

This NOP initiates the State CEQA process. The Authority is issuing this NOP to solicit public and agency input into the development of the scope of the EIR and to advise the public that outreach activities will be conducted by the Authority and its representatives in the preparation of the combined EIR/EIS. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), an operating administration within the United States Department of Transportation, will serve as federal lead agency for the federal environmental review process complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The FRA has responsibility for oversight of the safety of railroad operations, including the safety of any proposed high-speed train system. The FRA will publish a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register*, announcing the agency's intention to initiate the federal environmental review process for this segment of the HST project.

The Authority and the FRA completed a Final Program EIR/EIS in August 2005 as the first-phase of a tiered environmental review process for the proposed California HST system. The Project Level EIR/EIS will be the next level of analysis and will be the second-phase, tiered from the certified Final Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California HST System. The tiering process will ensure that the Project Level EIR/EIS is consistent with and builds upon all previous analyses and decisions made for the Tier 1 Program Level EIR/EIS. The technical studies, impact analysis, and mitigation measures described in the Final Program Level EIR/EIS will be reviewed and impacts will be analyzed at a detail level of analysis appropriate to a 30% design during the preparation of the Project Level EIR/EIS.

DATES: Written comments on the scope of the Los Angeles to Orange County HST EIR/EIS should be provided to the Authority at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. Public scoping meetings are scheduled from April 5 through 12, 2007 as noted below.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope should be sent to Mr. Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director, ATTN: Los Angeles to Orange County HST, California High-Speed Rail Authority, 925 L Street, Suite 1425, Sacramento CA 95814, or via email with subject line "Los Angeles to Orange County HST" to: comments@hsr.ca.gov. Comments may also be provided orally or in writing at the scoping meetings.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Dan Leavitt at: 916/322-1397.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) was established in 1996 and is authorized and directed by statute to undertake the planning for the development of a proposed statewide HST network that is fully coordinated with other public transportation services. The Legislature has granted the Authority the powers necessary to oversee the construction and operation of a statewide HST network once financing is secured. As part of the Authority's efforts to implement a high-speed train system, the Authority adopted a Final Business Plan in June 2000, which reviewed the economic feasibility of a 700-mile-long HST system capable of speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour on a dedicated, fully grade-separated state-of-the-art track.

In 2005, the Authority and FRA completed a Final Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California High-Speed Train System (Statewide Program EIR/EIS), as the first-phase of a tiered environmental review process. The Authority certified the Final Program EIR under CEQA and approved the proposed HST System, and FRA issued a Record of Decision under NEPA on the Final Program EIS. This statewide program EIR/EIS established the purpose and need for the HST system, analyzed a HST alternative, and compared it with a No Project/No Action Alternative and a Modal Alternative. In approving the statewide program EIR/EIS, the Authority and the FRA selected the HST Alternative and selected certain corridors/general alignments and general station locations, incorporated mitigation strategies and design practices, and specified further measures to guide the development of the HST system at the site-specific project level of environmental review to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts.

The Los Angeles to Orange County HST Project Level EIR/EIS will be one of a number of second-tier environmental reviews for segments of the HST system that FRA and the Authority intend to undertake. It will be tiered from and incorporate by reference the certified statewide program EIR/EIS in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR § 1508.28) and State CEQA Guidelines (14 C.C.R. § 15168[b]). Tiering will ensure that the Los Angeles to Orange County HST EIR/EIS builds upon all previous work prepared for and incorporated in the statewide program EIR/EIS. The EIR/EIS will be carried out in accordance with FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 Fed. Reg. 28545 [May 26, 1999]) and will address NEPA and CEQA, and will also continue the NEPA/Clean Water Act Section 404 merger process established through the statewide Program EIR/EIS process.

This Los Angeles to Orange County HST EIR/EIS and other project level EIR/EISs will examine a range of project alternatives for portions of the proposed HST system within corridors selected in the Statewide Final Program EIR/EIS, as well as a no action alternative. This and other project level EIR/EISs will describe site-specific environmental impacts, will identify specific mitigation measures to address those impacts and will incorporate design practices to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. The FRA and the Authority will assess the site characteristics, size, nature, and timing of proposed site-specific projects to determine whether the impacts are potentially significant and whether impacts can be avoided or mitigated. This and other project EIR/EISs will identify and evaluate reasonable and feasible site-specific alignment alternatives, and evaluate the impacts from construction, operation, and maintenance of the HST system. Information and documents regarding this HST environmental review process will be made available through the Authority's Internet site: <http://www.cahighspeedrail.gov/>.

Project Objectives/Purpose and Need: The need for a high-speed train (HST) system is directly related to the expected growth in population, and increases in intercity travel demand in California over the next twenty years and beyond. With growth in travel demand, there will be an increase in travel delays arising from the growing congestion on California's highways and at airports. In addition, there will be negative effects on the economy, quality of life, and air quality in and around California's metropolitan areas from a transportation system that will become less reliable as travel demand increases. The intercity highway system, commercial airports, and conventional passenger rail serving the intercity travel market are currently operating at or near capacity, and will require large public investments for maintenance and expansion to meet existing demand and future growth. The purpose of the proposed HST system is to provide a new mode of high-speed intercity travel that would link the major metropolitan areas of the state; interface with international airports, mass transit, and highways; and provide added capacity to meet increases in intercity travel demand in California in a manner sensitive to and protective of California's unique natural resources.

Alternatives: Los Angeles to Orange HST EIR/EIS will consider a No Action or No Project Alternative and HST Alternatives for the Los Angeles to Orange County corridor.

No Action Alternative: The take no action (No Project or No Build) alternative is defined to serve as the baseline for assessment of the HST Alternative. The No Build Alternative represents the region's transportation system (highway, air, and conventional rail) as it existed in 2006, and as it would exist after completion of programs or projects currently planned for funding and implementation by 2030. The No Build Alternative defines the existing and future intercity transportation system for the Los Angeles to Orange corridor based on programmed and funded improvements to the intercity transportation system through 2030, according to the following sources of information: State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) for all modes of travel, airport plans, and intercity passenger rail plans.

HST Alternative: The Authority proposes to construct, operate and maintain an electric-powered steel-wheel-on-steel-rail HST system, over 700-mile long (1,126-kilometer long), capable of speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour (mph) (320 kilometers per hour [km/h]) on dedicated, fully grade-separated tracks, with state-of-the-art safety, signaling, and automated train control systems. For the Los Angeles to Orange County segment, the Authority and the FRA selected the LOSSAN rail corridor as the feasible route option along with a connection between Union Station and the existing LOSSAN rail corridor. (See Attachment A – Alternatives Description and Figures A and B).

The Union Station to LOSSAN Connector would likely be built primarily as an elevated guideway starting from the upper level of Union Station and coming to grade in or near the LOSSAN River Corridor. The Connector would be between one-half to three-quarters of a mile in length. The exact alignment for the Connector will be determined by engineering feasibility analysis and minimum impact to neighborhoods and ongoing redevelopment in the area.

The LOSSAN rail corridor is a combination of three segments, with three different owners: The River Corridor, The BNSF San Bernardino Subdivision, and The Orange Subdivision. All three segments are intensively used for railroad transportation, which has been their historic role in the region's economy for nearly 120 years.

The River Corridor extends for approximately three miles along the west bank of the Los Angeles River, from near Union Station to Redondo Junction (near Washington Boulevard). It is owned by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Agency (Metro) and is operated by the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA), the joint powers authority that operates the "Metrolink" commuter rail service.

The BNSF San Bernardino Subdivision segment of the LOSSAN rail corridor extends 22.3 miles eastward from Redondo Junction to Fullerton. There are several major freight yards and a locomotive maintenance facility along this segment, including Hobart Yard in Vernon, the largest capacity intermodal (train to truck shipping container) yard in the nation. From the time it was built in 1888 to the present, the segment has been owned by the BNSF and its predecessor.

The Orange Subdivision segment of the corridor extends 42 miles southeast from Fullerton to the San Diego County line and beyond (under San Diego County ownership) to San Diego. Only the northern portion of this segment from Fullerton to the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (5.3 miles) will be addressed in this environmental study. This segment was sold to the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) in 1993 under the same provisions as the sale of The River Corridor.

Probable Effects: The purpose of the EIR/EIS process is to explore in a public setting the effects of the proposed project on the physical, human, and natural environment. The Authority will continue the tiered evaluation of all significant environmental, social, and economic impacts of the construction and operation of the HST system. This Project Level EIR/EIS would analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with implementing the Los Angeles to Orange County segment of the HST system (a total of 30.6 miles), which includes but is not limited to: displacement of commercial and residential properties; community and neighborhood impacts and disruption; increased noise and vibration along the rail corridor; traffic impacts associated with stations; effects to historic properties or archaeological sites; impacts to parks and recreation resources; visual quality effects; exposure to seismic and flood hazards; impacts to water resources, wetlands, and sensitive biological species and habitat; land use compatibility impacts; energy use; and impacts to agricultural lands.

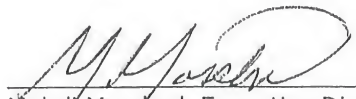
Scoping and Comments: The Authority encourages broad participation in the EIR/EIS process during scoping and review of the resulting environmental documents. Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested agencies and the public to insure the full range of issues related to the proposed action and all reasonable alternatives are addressed and all significant issues are identified. In particular, the Authority is interested in determining whether there are areas of environmental concern where there might be a potential for significant impacts identifiable at a project level. In response to this NOP, public agencies with jurisdiction are requested to advise the Authority of the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of each agency, and the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Public scoping meetings have been scheduled as an important component of the scoping process for both the State and Federal environmental review. The scoping meetings described in this Notice will be advertised locally and included in additional public notification. Scoping meetings are scheduled as noted below:

- **Union Station/METRO** (Los Angeles), METRO Board Room, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012, on April 5, 2007, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM and from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.
- **Anaheim**, Gordon Hoyt Conference Room, City Hall West, 201 S. Anaheim Boulevard, Anaheim, CA on April 11, 2007, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM and from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.
- **Norwalk Transportation Center**, Arts & Sports Complex Community Meeting Center (Sproul Room), 13200 Clarkdale Avenue, Norwalk, CA 90651 on April 12, 2007, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM and from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response to this Notice of Preparation must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than April 24, 2007. We invite your suggestions about the potential environmental impacts to be addressed in the Los Angeles to Orange County HST Project Level EIR/EIS.

Please send your response and direct any comments or questions concerning this project to Mr. Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director of the California High-Speed Rail Authority, at the address shown above.

Date: 3/12/07

Signature: 
Mehdi Morshed, Executive Director

Attachment A – ALTERNATIVES DESCRIPTION

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will consider all reasonable alternative HST alignments and station options at a project level of analysis for the LOSSAN corridor between the cities of Los Angeles and Anaheim. The alternatives will include:

NO-PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

The take no action (No Project or No Build) alternative is defined to serve as the baseline for assessment of the HST Alternative. The No Build Alternative represents the region's transportation system (highway, air, and conventional rail) as it existed in 2006, and as it would exist after completion of programs or projects currently planned for funding and implementation by 2030. The No Build Alternative defines the existing and future intercity transportation system for the Los Angeles to Orange County corridor based on programmed and funded improvements to the intercity transportation system through 2030, according to the following sources of information:

- State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP),
- Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) for all modes of travel,
- Airport plans, and
- Intercity passenger rail plans (Amtrak Five- and Twenty-year Plans).

HIGH-SPEED TRAIN ALTERNATIVE

The Authority proposes to construct, operate and maintain a 700-mile long (1,126-kilometer long) electric-powered steel-wheel-on-steel-rail HST system capable of speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour (mph) (320 kilometers per hour [km/h]) on dedicated, fully grade-separated tracks, with state-of-the-art safety, signaling, and automated train control systems. The Los Angeles to Orange County corridor selected by the Authority and FRA with the statewide program EIR/EIS follows the existing BNSF/Metrolink rail corridor (also known as the LOSSAN Corridor) from Los Angeles Union Station as far south as Irvine. The Los Angeles to Orange County HST Project Level EIR/EIS will only consider HST service as far south as Anaheim. HST service between Anaheim to Irvine may be considered separately in the future by the Authority.

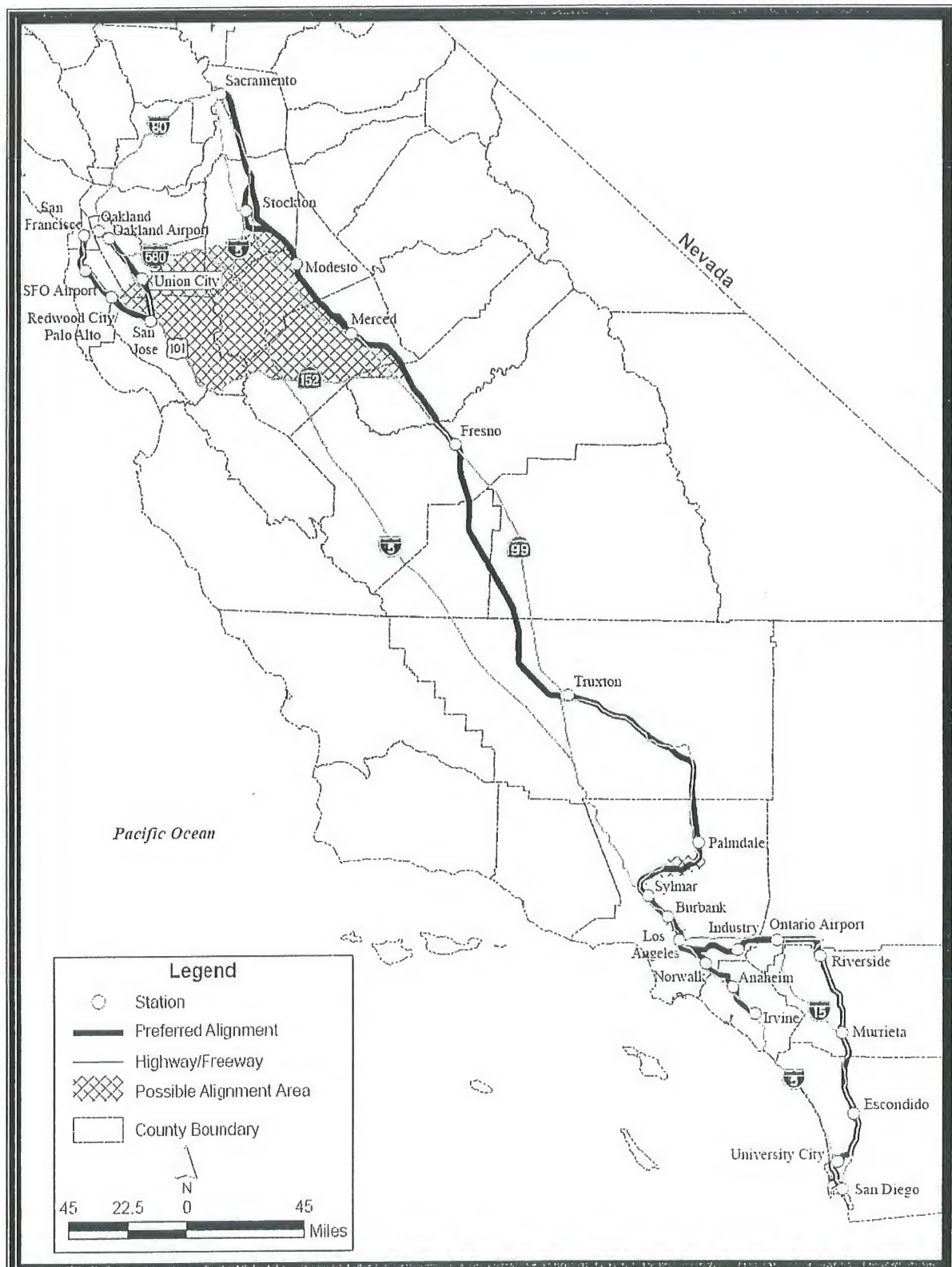
Further engineering studies will examine and refine alignments in the selected corridor, including the previously considered alignment option that shares tracks with other passenger services separated from freight with 4 total tracks (2 for passenger rail service and 2 for freight) between Los Angeles and Fullerton. South of Fullerton, the alignment would be two tracks with additional passing tracks located at intermediate stations. The electrified HST would share tracks (at reduced speeds) with non-electric Metrolink commuter rail, Amtrak Surfliner intercity services and occasional freight trains (there are fewer freight operations south of Fullerton). This alignment option is based on the premise that the capacity and compatibility issues associated with the shared operations with existing non-electric service (Surfliners, Metrolink, and freight) will be resolved. Additional alignment options will be considered that involve dedicated HST tracks that may be exclusive to HST service or that may also accommodate Metrolink express services.

STATIONS

Station location options were selected by the Authority and FRA with the statewide program EIR/EIS considering travel time, train speed, cost, local access times, potential connections with other modes of transportation, ridership potential, and the distribution of population and major destinations along the route, and local planning constraints/conditions. Alternative station sites at the selected general station locations will be identified and evaluated in this project level EIR/EIS. Station area development policies to encourage transit-friendly development near and around HST stations will be prepared in coordination with local and regional planning agencies that would have the potential to promote higher density, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development around the stations. Potential station locations to be evaluated in the Los Angeles to Orange County HST Project Level EIR/EIS include: City of Los Angeles –

Union Station; City of Norwalk – Norwalk Transportation Center; and City of Anaheim – Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (ARTIC). In addition, potential sites for turnback/layover train storage facilities and a main HST repair and heavy-maintenance facility will be evaluated in the Los Angeles to Orange County HST Project Level EIR/EIS. The Statewide HST system and the Los Angeles to Anaheim segment are illustrated on Figures A and B of Attachment A.

Figure A
Statewide High-speed Train System
Preferred Alignments and Stations Statewide



Note: The Anaheim to Irvine segment is not included in this environmental document, and will be evaluated separately at a later date.

Figure B
Los Angeles/Anaheim Segment



Phase 1 of the Proposed Project is located between Union Station in Los Angeles and the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center in Orange County. It is this segment that is being evaluated in the Project-Level EIR/EIS, and is shown as a solid blue line in the above figure.

Phase 2 is located between the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (ARTIC) and the Irvine Station in Orange County. Phase 2 will be evaluated in a future environmental document, and is shown as a dashed blue line in the above figure.